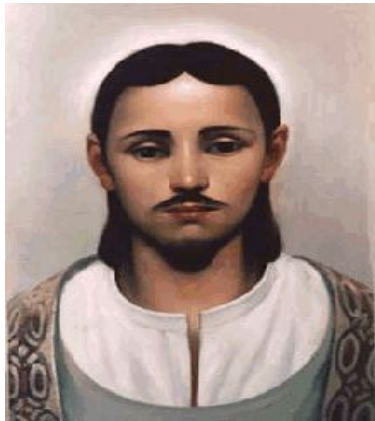


# Differences between Manichaeism and Islam



**A Publication of the Holy and Ancient Manichaean Church**

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## On God

### Islam

Islam emphasizes the unity of God above all as shown by the foundational concept of *tawhid*.



In Islam, the one God is called by the name Allah. *Who is God?*

Islam also opposes the Christian doctrines of the Trinity or the divinity of Jesus because these are considered polytheistic.

### Manichaeism

In Manichaeism, we also emphasize the oneness of God, the Divine Source outside of Creation.

We call God by the name of Ilaha and never use the name Allah to refer to Him.

This is because the name Allah refers to a pagan god worshiped in the Arabian peninsula during pre-Islamic times.

Therefore, for us to use the name Allah to refer to the One True God would be to commit idolatry, and this is a heinous sin in Manichaeism.

We also don't believe in the Trinity, or that Jesus is God.

In fact, we assert that Jesus is a created being since He is a manifestation of the One Created Being, and that therefore Jesus is **not** God.

## Are Manichaeans guilty of Kufar or Shirk?

**Kafir:** The rejection of God. Muslims believe a person who does not believe in God as being guilty of Kufar and one who rejects God is a Kafir.

Manichaeans believe in the One True God, Ilaha, not Allah, who is a moon deity of the Arabian peninsula and an evil spirit.

Manichaeans are not Kafir for rejecting Allah because they are true believers in the One True God.

**Shirk:** To associate anyone or anything with God. Muslims believe a person who associates anyone with God is guilty of Shirk and is a Mushrik.

Manichaeans do not associate anyone or anything as being on the same level as Ilaha, the Divine Source.

Ilaha is composed of attributes: one that is the Masculine attribute, Abba d'Rabbuta, the Divine Mind, and another attribute that is the feminine, the Divine Mother, the Energy or Power of God.

They are aspects or attributes of the One God, not separate beings and because of this can never be said to be different deities.

The Living Spirit is the Creation, not Ilaha, therefore He is not God, nor on the same level as the Divine Source. He is the Creation, not the Creator, so Manichaeans are not practitioners of Shirk.

## On Worship and Idolatry

### Islam

Islam teaches that the purpose of our lives is to love and serve God and to worship no one else besides Him.

Islam condemns any form of idolatry, hence why images, statues, and sculptures are not seen in mosques to prevent faithful Muslims from turning these items into idols.



*Worship*

### Manichaeism

As Manichaeans, we agree with Islam on this matter.

The first commandment of Manichaeism says:

“You shall worship the One God and not commit yourself to the worship of idols; not bowing down to physical objects or ideals in order to worship them.”

In our worship, we don't bow before any images or objects of any form.

Our places of worship are austere with no images, decorations, or any other objects that might distract the faithful Manichaean from the only one we worship: God.

Furthermore, we don't worship any humans, worldly leaders, religious leaders or even Divine Messengers.

Although we honor and revere Divine Messengers like Buddha and Jesus, we know that each one of them pointed us to

direct our worship to Ilaha, and not to them.

## On Muhammad and Divine Messengers

### Islam

In Islam, Muhammad is considered to be the last prophet of God in a series of prophets going back all the way to Adam.



*Muhammad*

Muslims believe that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and revealed to him the verses of the Qur'an.

As such, Muslims think that the Jewish and Christian scriptures are altered texts that although they may contain grains of truth, they are ultimately unreliable.

The Qur'an, however, is seen as the pure and unadulterated text perfectly reflecting Divine Revelation.

### Manichaeism

In Manichaeism, Muhammad is **not** considered to be a Divine Messenger.

As mentioned before, Allah is considered by Manichaeans to refer to a pagan god, and thus we think Muhammad substituted the worship of the One True God for the worship of an evil spirit while falsely claiming to possess revelations from the Archangel Gabriel.

This entails that the Qur'an is not a revealed text for Manichaeans.

In fact, Manichaeans believe that most religious texts, although they may contain some seeds of truth, are altered, and thereby they no longer reflect the Pure Teaching of the One True God.

This is why we Manichaeans restrict ourselves to the use of our own Holy Scriptures: the Karuzuta d'Mar Mani.

Regarding the issue of Divine Messengers, we also have to disagree with Muslims when they assert that Muhammad is the last prophet.

Manichaeans believe that Divine Messengers have appeared on Earth throughout all of human history (up to the current day) in all geographical locations.

Notable Divine Messengers that Manichaeans acknowledge include: Seth, Zoroaster, Mahavira, Buddha, Jesus, etc.

As for more recent Divine Messengers, the World Teacher appeared on this Earth on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 in Nepal, and He is now the Spiritual Patriarch of the Manichaean Church.

So the idea that the Divine Messengers stopped coming after Muhammad's death is false.

The common trait among all Divine Messengers is that they all point the path to the One True God and will never lead anyone into idolatry.

### **Are Manichaeans considered People of the Book?**

In the Qur'an, great respect is shown to People of the Book, but who are they?

They are Jews, Sabians, and Christians.

Muslims also believe that they too are people of the Book, though they usually refer to these other faiths and cultures as People of the Book.

Manichaeans also believe in the One God outside of Creation, they have a covenant with God, and they follow a strict way of life that even Christian priests and monks ended up emulating over time.

Yet nowhere in the Qur'an are the Manichaeans referenced.

There is reference to Sabians as being people of the Book, but there is no direct reference to Manichaeans in the Qur'an.

Keep in mind, at the time of origin of Islam during the lifetime of Muhammad, Manichaeism was a widespread religion throughout the Middle East and Asia rivaling the number of adherents to Christianity.

That Manichaeism would not be referenced at that time, that it neither endorsed nor condemned it is curious.

Some scholars believe that the term "Sabeans" was an umbrella term to cover a number of religious sects in the Middle East including Mandeaeans, Elkesaites, and Manichaeans.

Zoroastrians would not fit into this context as the Qur'an would define them as the "Fire Worshipers".

Whether the text seeks to refer to Manichaeans as one of the People of the Book, or it seeks to deny them the status as a People of the Book, it needs to be kept in mind that the Manichaeans believed in the God of Abraham, followed the laws given to them, and were considered to be the

Other Sheep (John 10:16) referenced by Isa in the Injil.

Either way, due to the strict monotheistic beliefs and pure, chaste and virtuous approach to life that even the ascetics of Christianity admired, there can be no doubt that any allegation that Manichaeans did not fit the model of a People of the Book is delusional.

## **On Pillars of Religion**

### Islam

Islam is based on five pillars:

- (1) the shahadah (creed),
- (2) daily prayers (salat),
- (3) almsgiving (zakah),
- (4) fasting during Ramadan and
- (5) the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) at least once in a lifetime

This has been one of the most attractive features of Islam, since it simplifies the faith to its basic components compared to the doctrinal complexity of other religions like Christianity.

### Manichaeism

Manichaeism, for its part, is based on Three Pillars:

- 1) Scriptures
- 2) Tradition
- 3) Revelation

Even though Revelation is the Third Pillar, it's the basis of every element of Manichaeism.



*Pillars of a Religion*

Without it, our religion would be meaningless.

Revelation is not constrained by place or time: it has always happened, and it keeps on happening no matter how many religions may claim otherwise.

Revelation also includes the revelation of traditions. These traditions are divinely sanctioned and to be followed by all Manichaeans.

From Revelation we also obtain the Scriptures, which Manichaeans study in order to live by their precepts.

In terms of behavior, we also have three foundational elements:

- 1) Worship of God
- 2) Laying aside of worldly attachments
- 3) Cultivation of virtue (fasting, almsgiving, and prayer)

It should be kept in mind that although we have some things in common with Islam such as praying, fasting, and alms-giving, all of these are directed towards the One True God and not to the false god of Allah.

This is a crucial difference because it makes Manichaean religious activities non-idolatrous and therefore pleasing in the eyes of God.

## **On Violence, Wars and Jihad**

### Islam

The term *jihad* is a term used in Islam that denotes struggle or striving towards some goal.

The word can have different connotations:

- 1) Jihad of the soul: fighting against one's own evil tendencies and against Satan.
- 2) Jihad of the community: struggle to build Muslim communities
- 3) Military jihad: warfare to defend Islam.

Despite the many meanings of the word, the term *jihad* has become renowned in the West, due to the mass media, as a term to describe Islamic terrorism.

Although moderate Muslims may not support such terrorism, there are significant numbers of Islamic extremists who support *jihad*.

Such violence not only affects much of the Middle East, but also parts of Asia and Africa where Islam is present and Western Europe, Russia, and North America as potential targets.

In this manner, *jihad* has become a problem of **global** proportions that affects many people all over the globe.

Not only that, Islamic terrorism has also hurt Islam's reputation throughout the world, making many people develop an irrational hatred for Muslims. This has led some people to consider Islam a religion not even worth converting to.

### Manichaeism

For us Manichaeans the solution is pretty clear: there is absolutely **no** divine sanction for terrorism of any form, Islamic or non-Islamic.

Manichaeans strongly believe in the principle of **nonviolence**.



*Non-Violence*

Most of the time force is unnecessary, and it should only be used for the purpose of self-defense and in defending innocent life, including human and animal life.

It should be noted that while the Prophet Mani lived in Shapur's court, the Persian Empire engaged in no conquest or expansionist warfare.

In fact, Shapur only changed his policy of non-conquest when the Avestan priesthood pressured him to enter into nationalistic conflicts, which Mani denounced as immoral.

After Mani was martyred, the Persian Empire renewed its imperialistic activities of old.

We have to realize that most wars conducted in the past and in the present were and are unjust in nature.

The same goes for terrorism no matter how many times terrorists may use the terms "liberation" or "struggle against injustice" in order to portray themselves as the victims.

Even if one is being unjustly oppressed, that does not justify the killing of innocent

people.

Therefore, as Manichaeans, we support any action of force against terrorists, but not the wars in the so-called “War on Terror” that are more about imperialism, greedy acquisition of land and natural resources, and needless killing of innocent people who have no ties to terrorists.

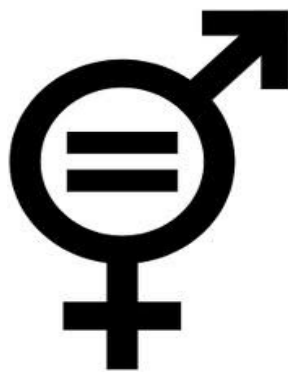
Manichaeans value tolerance and freedom.

Even though we don't agree with many of the tenets of other religions, we believe in the freedom of others to live out their spiritual lives in the way they see fit.

We are not allowed to impose our beliefs by the sword, while at the same time we will defend ourselves from anyone who tries to impose their beliefs on us using the sword.

## Equality of Women

Islam speaks of the importance of the equality of women and many people overlook that women's rights in Saudi Arabia were almost absent prior to the existence of Islam.



*Gender Equality*

But women's rights in other cultures were not absent.

The equal treatment of women has always been of great importance in Manichaeism.

A man has no greater status in society than a woman or vice versa. They are both light sparks or souls and their differences are not due to one being greater and the other being lesser.

Different qualities does not meant disparate qualities. A healthy society provides for complete equality of the genders.

While Islam does allow for some liberties for women, it does not allow them all the liberties due to women.

For example, the wearing of the Hijab is offensive in God's eyes. The covering up of what God has granted to women is inappropriate.

The wearing of simple attire and a head covering in worship is laudable, but wearing clothing that obscures the woman and even her face, for fear that others will lust after her, is not a Divine decree but a man made law.

In some societies if a man assaults a woman, there are ignorant persons who will accuse the woman of wearing suggestive clothing that encouraged such an attack.

A religious society encourage both the man and the woman to act in chaste ways: wearing simple clothing that is not revealing, but if someone were to present themselves in such a way, it is the individual's responsibility to control themselves.

At no point would any person be allowed to justify an assault on another human being on the basis of how that man or woman was dressed. This is ignorance.

## Saints

### Islam

In Islam there is a conflict as to whether a person may honor a saint or not.

In Sunni Islam it is prohibited to visit the grave of a Muslim saint.

But many Muslims do this nonetheless.

### Manichaeism

It is a natural attraction to want to honor a saint, and it does not mean that the saint is being worshiped.

Showing respect and offering worship are

different and should be understood in the proper context.

In Manichaeism, we love and honor our saints and martyrs, but at no point do we ever confuse the love and respect that is shown to the saint for worship. All prayer is for Ilaha, alone.

**If you would like to know more about the Manichaean religion or the Holy and Ancient Manichaean Church, please contact:**

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**If you would like to know more about the Arabic expression of Manichaeism, suited for those coming from an Islamic background, then join our Facebook Group:**

[Jama'at al-Manavi](#)



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